



# Parents FLAG Edmonton

NOVEMBER 1994

## NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, Nov 15, '94

@ 7:30 PM (Sharp!)

Gay & Lesbian Community  
Centre, Room 104  
11745 Jasper Ave

Following a very brief business meeting the focus will be on parent concerns. Please see "sample excerpt" under Resource Reviews for more details.

For further information call  
Lynne [redacted] or Cindy [redacted]

As always we welcome lesbian & gay participation in our group!

Coffee and juice will be served.



## RESOURCE REVIEWS

A wide variety of literature, videos and resource people are available in Edmonton to offer help to



nonheterosexuals, their parents and their friends.

Some of the literature, available in pamphlet form through PFLAG Edmonton, covers the following topics:

- \* Why is My Child Lesbian/Gay?
- \* Can We Understand?
- \* About our Children
- \* Coming Out to Your Parents
- \* What Does the Bible say about homosexuality?
- \* Is Homosexuality a Sin?

\* Supporting Our Lesbian/Gay Loved Ones

The following is a "sample excerpt" taken from the last pamphlet:

"When parents and family members are confronted by the issue of having a gay loved one, they generally go through a process of several stages—shock, denial, blaming, guilt, etc.—that can be extremely unsettling.

There are common issues that affect gay people and their families:

- \* **First**, the fear of rejection is very real.
- \* **Second**, integrating within the family is difficult.
- \* **Third**, accepting the homosexual lover as equal to a heterosexual mate requires education.

Just as coming out is difficult for gay people, the coming-out process is equally difficult for parents who often crawl right into the closet their children have just left.

There is also the issue of dealing with negative comments from relatives, friends, and co-workers.

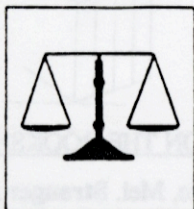
Most people are ignorant about the nature of homosexuality. All they have heard is negative. Our society's myths and misconcep-





-tions prevail in the media. Also, we tend to be uncomfortable when discussing sex in general; this makes it even more difficult when discussing homosexuality.

Parents and Friends of Lesbian and Gays (Pafents FLAG, P-FLAG) is a national family support and educational organization. It serves as an adjunct to professional help. Its goals, programs, and services are designed to lead gay people, their families and friends, and our society to understand and accept homosexuality."



#### Editors Note:

Beyond the passive "acceptance" of homosexuality PFLAG Edmonton members strive to develop a more active role in the following ways:

- \* Working to safeguard the rights of lesbian and gay people;
- \* Acknowledging that being non-heterosexual in Alberta requires much courage and inner strength;
- \* Valuing diversity in people and seeing non-heterosexuals as an integral and desirable part of that diversity;
- \* Viewing non-heterosexuals with genuine affection and delight and advocating on their behalf.

A free copy of these pamphlets may be picked up at any PFLAG Edmonton meeting or by contacting Lynne or Cindy. Their phone numbers appear on the cover page of this newsletter.



#### CINDY'S SUMMARY

(Oct. 18, '94 meeting)

A group of 25 parents, friends and nonheterosexuals were welcomed by our always congenial host, Jeff. The meeting was chaired by Cindy who skillfully and quickly covered the following group business so that time could be given over to individual parent's concerns.

#### Summit '94

Ernie, Dorothy, Jenny, Terry, Denise and Cindy outlined what they had learned at this conference as well as some the fun and unexpectedly rewarding experiences they had. (Please see the Oct. '94 newsletter for more details) Well done PFLAG parents!

#### **GALOC (Gays & Lesbians on Campus) Oct, '94 Meeting**

Cindy relayed an open invitation from GALOC for parents to attend their October meeting. Several parents responded.

#### **GMAC (Gay Men's Outreach Crew)**

The October meeting of this group will be attended by Jenny, Terry & Cindy.

#### **PFLAG Edmonton - Publicity**

\*Mike suggested sending out letters to local newspapers in the Greater Edmonton Area to request free publication of meeting announcements.

\*The group agreed to place a PFLAG phone number in the "white pages" under the GLCC entry.

\*Denise volunteered to manage PFLAG'S publicity needs. THANK YOU Denise!



#### **Media Announcements:**

\*CBC RADIO, Oct. 19 @ 8:40 AM

A father will talk about his gay son and their father-son relationship.

(Editor's Note: PFLAG sent a letter of thanks to CBC RADIO for presenting this talk.)

\*Videotron, Channel 22 and Shaw Channel 27 will air two half-hour programs which explore the subjects "Why Am I Gay? and "Gaybashing".

\*Videotron, Channel 24, Sundays @ 9:30 pm cameos the lives of lesbian and gay persons on the program "Different God"

**Please check the front 3 pages of your TV guide for further programs.**

#### **PFLAG Library**

A library of books and videos will be started with some of our present funds. Donations are welcome!

#### **Advocacy Work**

How can we make a difference? This topic was raised as food for further thought.

#### **Rotating Chairperson**

Those willing to chair a meeting please let Cindy know!

#### **Treasurer**

Cindy will continue as treasurer for now.





## EVENTS CALENDAR

## TOWN HALL MEETING



"The Gay & Lesbian Community and the Edmonton Police Service invite you to their Annual Town Hall Meeting. We will be reporting on our activities over the last year. The Police Service will also be making a presentation. We will be seeking your input in order to continue being effective in representing the diverse needs of our community. Other topics to be discussed are hate crimes and family violence.

A question and answer period will follow the evening's discussion.

**Please join us and bring a friend!"**

WEDNESDAY, NOV 9, '94

RIVER VALLEY OUTDOOR CENTER, 10125 - 97 Ave. (The old brick school building just south of the James MacDonald Freeway)

The next GAY & LESBIAN monthly meeting will be held Dec. 04, '94 at 7:30 pm in the Gay & Lesbian Community Centre, #104 11745 - Jasper Ave.

**BOOK CONCERT**

with Heather Bishop

Nov. 26 @ 8:00 PM

in the Garneau Theatre (8712 - 109 St.) Tickets are \$8 low-income and in advance; \$10 advance; and \$12 at the door. One

year subscriptions are \$20 low income and \$32 regular.

**WORKSHOP**

**'Unlearning Racism'**

For info phone: [REDACTED]

**EDITORIAL**

The following editorial is a partial excerpt from PERCEPTIONS: The Gay & Lesbian newsmagazine of the Prairies, Vol. 12, Issue 5.

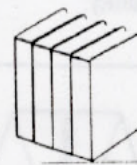
"It's amazing how so many aspects of life in our homophobic society work at making our lives invisible. A couple of weeks ago I attended the funeral of someone who I've known for over 25 years. This individual had been part of Saskatoon's gay and lesbian community for all those years. He had been involved in numerous lesbian and gay organizations and during the last decade was one of the key people in the fight for human rights protection.

You would never have known that if you attended his funeral. No mention was made of the years of work he had done in his community. No mention was made of his life after the time he finished his schooling. The funeral was for someone who was not known to me or anyone else at the funeral.

The funeral was arranged by his mother who apparently never did accept the reality that her son was gay. In the eyes of his mother he was still that young man who left home to attend university. The part of his life between university graduation and death was obliterated. His life and work were made invisible in an attempt to deny who he was.

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I find it sad and ironic that after 25 years of struggling for liberation our lives can so easily be erased and attempts made to eradicate who we are... forces active in our communities who want to deny our existence and deny the diversity of our community....are prepared to use any means at their disposal to return us all to the hell of the closet.....This issue of PERCEPTIONS is dedicated to Don McNamee whose contribution to our community we want to acknowledge."



**ON THE BOOKSHELF**

White, Mel. *Stranger At The Gate: To Be Gay and Christian in America*. 1994. Mel White, a former ghostwriter for such prominent Christian conservatives as Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and Oliver North details his own troubling yet ultimately empowering acknowledgement of his homosexuality. In finally reconciling his faith with his sexuality, White maintains that only through distorting the Bible can one find prohibitions against homosexuality there.

(Copies of this book may be loaned from either the Jasper Place or Woodcroft libraries in Edmonton.)





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# It's a Gay Life!

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NOVEMBER 1994

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## TCHAIKOVSKY, THE MAN AND HIS MUSIC

### A GAY LIFE IN THE 1800's:

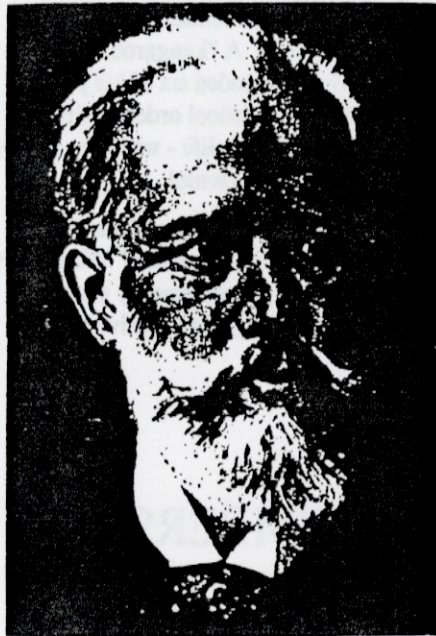
Born May 7, 1840 in a small provincial town in Tsarist Russia Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was destined to become one of the world's most popular Romantic composers.

Peter's father, an Inspector of Mines, and with a second wife 20 years his junior, were a middle class professional couple enjoying access to the cultural life of their times.

Young Tchaikovsky learned piano at an early age. As his extreme sensitivity was beginning to assert itself he displayed an ability to dream about music. Once, waking in a state of agitation he asked his parents, "Can't you hear the music?"

In 1850 the Tchaikovsky family moved to St. Petersburg, then the capital of the Russian Empire. Situated on the Gulf of Finland, as close to the Arctic as Alberta's Northern border, the city contained the Winter Palace of the Tsar as well as countless grand homes of the aristocracy, magnificent churches, monasteries, and other seats of learning. This was where Peter was to hear his first symphony orchestra. It must have been an awe-inspiring and electrifying event in his young life as afterwards he "raved" in his sleep about the experience.

When Peter was fifteen his mother died of cholera. The effect of



this sad event can only be imagined by us. "Fate" was already knocking at the door of the young composer-to-be and would recur as the theme of much of his music. Also about this time he may have become aware of his "difference" from many of his peer group. In a crucial stage in his development his latent homosexuality would be declaring itself to his troubled and confused mind.

After studying law until the age of nineteen he then spent four years as a clerk at the Ministry of Justice. He would therefore be very aware of the laws and also the public attitudes regarding homosexual

behavior and might well have lived "in a frenzy of shame and concealment" such as would lead to his repeated nervous breakdowns.

In 1861 Tchaikovsky's father allowed him to study music at the famous St. Petersburg Conservatoire. His first large work, the fantasy overture "Romeo and Juliet", made quite an impact on the public. Based on Shakespeare's play it set the style for his "programme" music. There followed his "Nutcracker" ballet now a Christmas favorite at the Alberta Jubilee Auditorium. Many popular songs of the WWII era were direct "steals" from the pen of Tchaikovsky fifty years after his death.

Around 1866 the first signs of a nervous breakdown appeared when he wrote of "the fatal force which prevents our hopes of happiness from being realized....like the sword of Damocles suspended over the head....it is inescapable".

Suddenly Peter decided to marry, seeking happiness in company and "to remove for all time my unfortunate tendencies". Within two months of his wedding he fled the marriage, wading shoulder deep into the frigid Neva River hoping to die!

Recuperating in Italy he composed the delightfully sunny "Italian Caprice". A wealthy patron, Mme



Nadejda von Meck, having heard of his plight, first commissioned works from him, later paid off his debts and finally salaried him at 6,000 roubles annually. The one condition attached was that they never meet - and they never did!

Writing from his heart

Tchaikovsky composed many of his most famous and lasting works over the next twelve years, touching us on a powerful emotional level and with a wide range of forces, e.g. the "1812" overture with its huge orchestral score, cannons, church bells, and even fireworks.

In 1890 the patronage ended. Mme von Meck had run out of money! Now however our composer was famous, writing with great speed and energy, and on October 16, 1893 conducted the debut performance of his "Pathétique".

This piece was well received but "Fate" played the last card. Peter Tchaikovsky died a few days later, reportedly of cholera from drinking tainted water.

Since much evidence of his homosexuality was "removed" from his letters and diaries we must read between the lines and listen to his music with its underlying sadness to discover what "Fate" really claimed his life. A 1978 theory suggests that he was charged with having had a homosexual affair with a young aristocrat. A "kangaroo court" which included six of his peers from law school ordered him to take his own life - which he did by ingesting arsenic!

**What can we learn from his music and life story? What part did his homosexuality play in channeling the creative spirit**

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within him in the homophobic atmosphere of his time?

May the parallels with today's scene in the "arts world" and the devastation of the AIDS virus encourage parents to bring problems about sexual orientation out into the open for discussion, education and understanding. Fear and ignorance are our worst enemies.

Through PFLAG (Parents For Lesbians and Gays) we are attempting to open up channels of communication within the family group so that through a better understanding of tragedies of the past those of the present can be averted.

The following application is for anyone who may have recently heard of our group and would like to join, and/or receive a newsletter, and/or make a donation. Thankyou!

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Individual Membership \$15 ☐  
Household Membership \$25 ☐  
Student/Limited Income \$10 ☐  
Newsletter subscription \$10 ☐  
Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ ☐

Make cheques payable to P-FLAG/Edmonton and Mail to:  
Cindy \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Prov. \_\_\_\_\_

P-FLAG is a non-profit and all volunteer support P-FLAG group not affiliated with any ethnic, political or religious organizations. Memberships are available for all. All information collected is strictly confidential.